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Organizing and Archiving Your Projects

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*[This article was first published Feb. 5, 2004. **Updated** June 11, 2004, and again on 2/13/05. There's a related article that talks about the life-span of videotape DVDs and whether to archive on hard disk or video tape.*

[Click here to read about video tape.](#) [Click here to read about DVD lifespan.](#)]

Your project is done. The client is happy and their check has cleared the bank. It's time to trash that old project and get ready to tackle something new.

Except...

As your client was walking out the door for the last time, they said, "This was really great. And, in six months, if I get the budget, I'm going to come back here and re-edit some new pieces."

Great. Now, instead of trashing everything in sight, you need to archive your project just in case they come back.

What do you do?

Well, archiving a project is a lot easier if you take time to get it organized in the first place.

That's where this article can help; because organizing your project can be broken down into three easy steps:

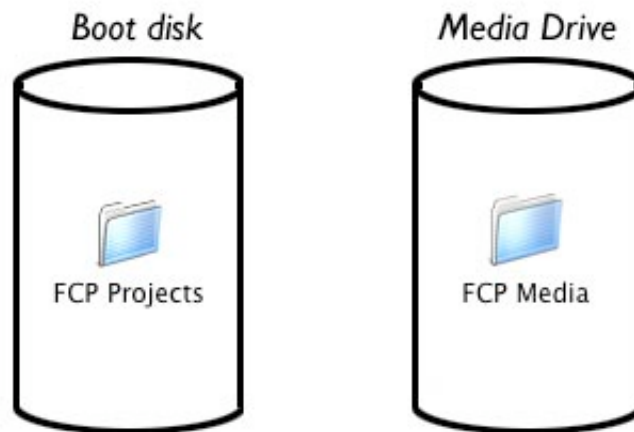
1. [Organize your project **BEFORE** you start](#)
2. [Stay organized during your project](#)
3. [Knowing what to archive when the project is done](#)

ORGANIZE BEFORE YOU START

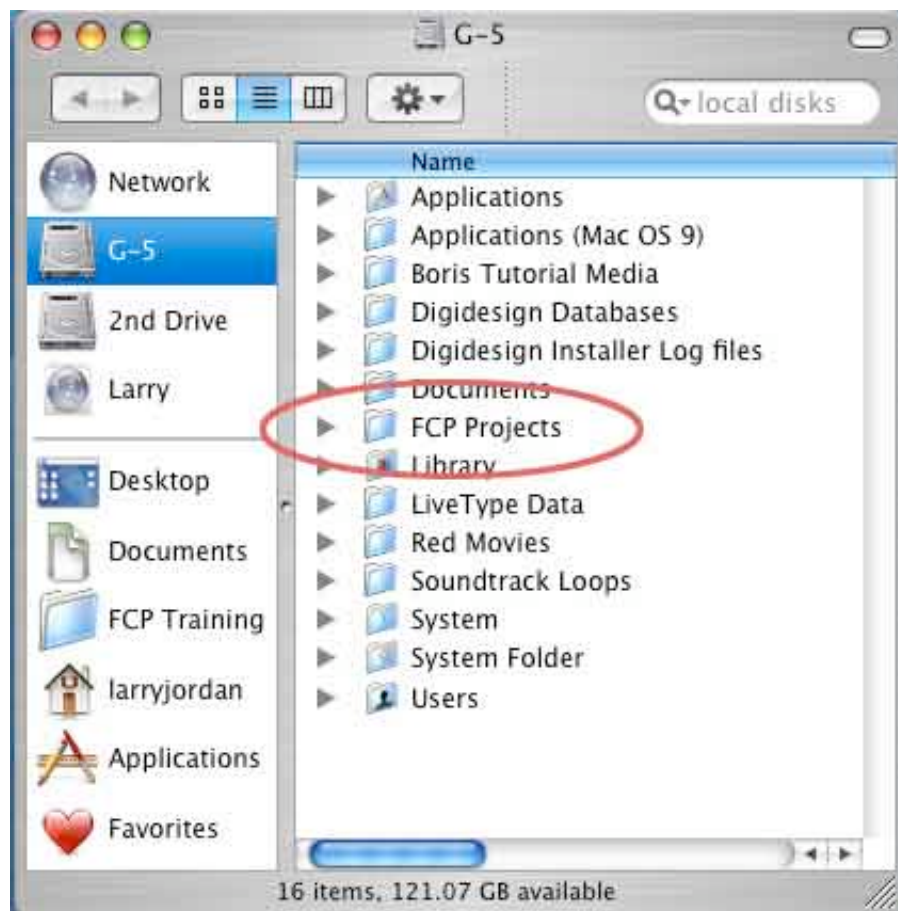
There are lots of different ways to organize a project. This is my system. It works for me. And, if you don't already have a system, this will work for you, too.

If you are serious about your editing, you'll have at least two hard drives: one for

the operating system and Final Cut Pro (called the "Boot Disk") and a second hard disk to hold all your media.

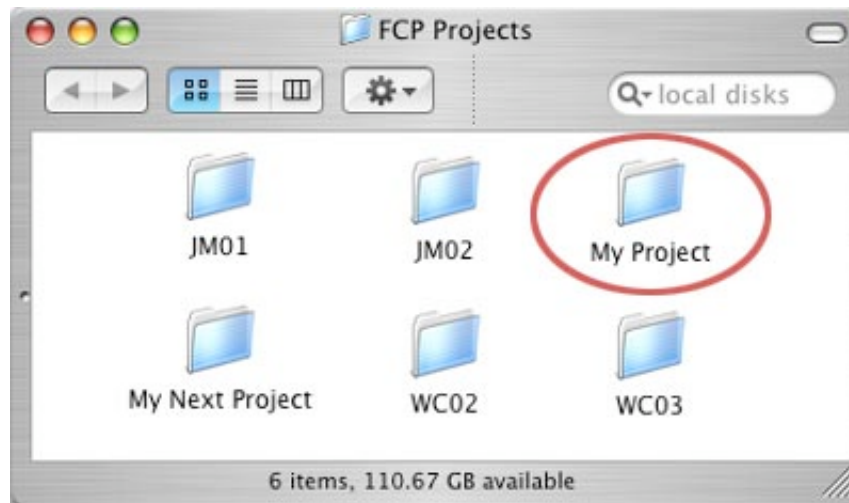


On your boot disk, create a folder called, "FCP Projects." This folder will hold all your non-timecode-based project files. If you are the only person using your computer, you can put this in your User folder, or anywhere else you care to store it. If other people also use your computer, store this folder at the "root" level, that is to say, at the same level as Applications and User, because that way, everyone can have access to the projects stored in this folder.

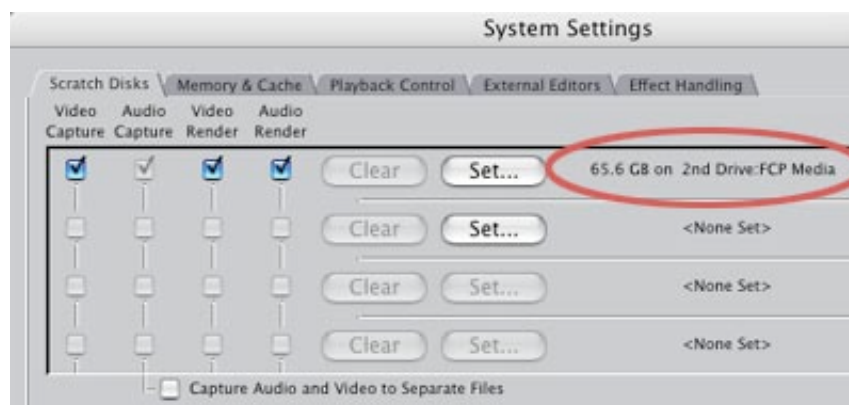


On your second drive, create a folder called, "FCP Media." This folder will store

all your timecode-based media.



As soon as I get a new project, I give it a name and create a new folder in the FCP Projects folder on the boot drive. For this example, I'll call my new opus: "My Project." (For the obsessive amongst us, you would replace "My Project" with the ACTUAL name of your project.)



Now, open Final Cut Pro, and go to Final Cut Pro -> System Settings and set the Scratch Disk to the new FCP Media folder you just created.

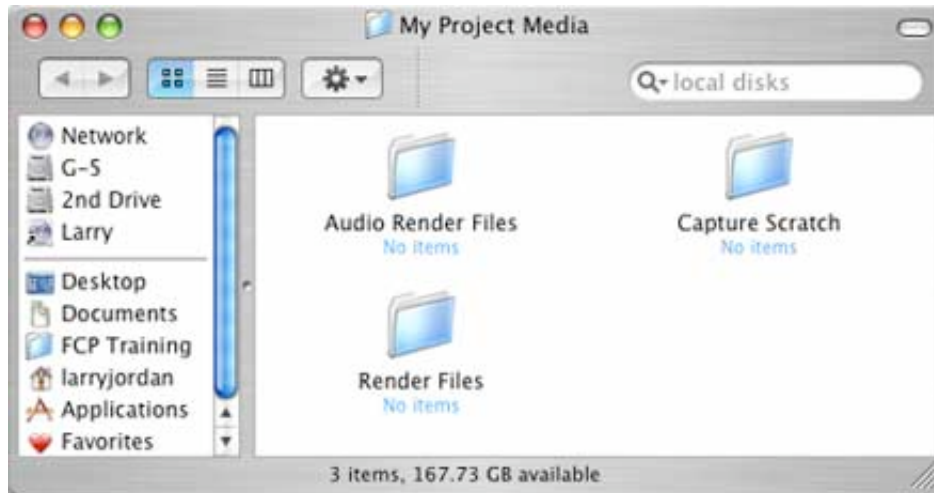
When FCP captures media, it automatically creates a new folder inside FCP Media > Capture Scratch named after your project file. This makes it VERY easy to find captured media on a project by project basis, because it's all sorted by project inside a single, FCP Media, folder.

If I am creating a project that will fit to a single hard disk, I will create only one "FCP Media" folder. If the project will require multiple hard disks, I create a folder called "FCP Media" on each hard disk, then I point the Scratch disk to each FCP Media folder on each hard drive (you can only have one scratch disk on a hard disk). Final Cut Pro version 4 allows up to 16 scratch disks.

If we go back to the Finder and open the FCP Media folder, we can see that FCP put at least three new folders inside:

- Audio Render Files
- Capture scratch

- Render Files



(You may also see another three files: AutoSave Vault, Thumbnail Cache folder, Waveform Cache folder, depending upon how your other System Settings are set.)

Best of all, I only need to create the FCP Media folder once. After that, the automatic filing of Final Cut keeps all the different media files for all my different projects in their own separate folders -- all in one place.

The whole process takes me two - three minutes at the start of each project and now I'm ready to start work.

STAY ORGANIZED DURING YOUR PROJECT

Here's the drill: all timecode-based media gets captured and stored in the FCP Media folder, on the second hard drive. **All** other files -- graphics, music, sound effects, memos, schedules, everything -- goes into the FCP Projects > My Project folder on my boot drive. Playing music or sound effect files on the boot disk is generally not a big deal because the bandwidth they require is small compared to video.

Critical to the whole archiving process is that as soon as a production tape is shot, I give it a reel number and write it on the tape cassette. All my tapes have UNIQUE reel numbers. For my personal tapes, I simply number them. For professional projects, I give them a project name and reel number: for instance, "WC04_01," where the project name is to the left of the underscore and the reel number is to the right.

Then, I am religious about making sure I add the correct reel number to every clip that gets logged or captured into Final Cut. And, remember, because of how we set the scratch disks, all captured media gets stored in the FCP Media folder on the second hard drive.

Another thing I am religious about is bringing every clip I plan to use into the Browser, rather than dragging it directly from the desktop to the Timeline. This means that every clip in my project shows up in the Browser.

Using this organizational system, ALL the elements of a project are in one of two places: the Media folder or the Project folder.

ARCHIVE WHEN THE PROJECT IS DONE

When the project is done and everything has been output and approved, you are ready to archive. The question is, "What?"

Again, here's my suggestion: Don't archive media. That's what your original camera source tapes are for. They are small and last for at least 20 years.

As a side note, when I was working in broadcast with 1" and 2" tapes, I was taught to NEVER store tapes on their side. Always store them on edge. For the short-term, how they are stored won't make any difference. Longer-term, however, storing tapes on edge decreases the effect of the earth's magnetic field and any potential oxide shift due to gravitation pulling on the oxide of your tapes.

I'm sure that tape stock today is better than 20 years ago. And the size of tapes and strength of the signal also tend to minimize these adverse effects.

All that having been said, I still store all my tapes on edge and away from heat and light. Oh, and I make dubs of all my most important work every 20 years or so.

So, if we aren't going to archive media, what are we going to do with it? The answer is simple, we simply grab the "My Project Media" folder **inside** FCP Media on the second drive and trash it!

Why? Because if every clip you used is in the Browser, AND if you assigned every clip a reel number, you can easily redigitize your entire project by selecting the clips you need in the Browser and going to File -> Batch Capture.

Final Cut will ask you to insert the source tape reel, then merrily recapture all the missing media. Best of all, recapturing when you need the media means that you can take advantage of all the improvements in codecs and Final Cut that occurred between the time your project ended and when you need to recapture.

(OK, one more caveat. If you somehow failed to get organized at the beginning of a project, your media files will be scattered all over your hard disks. Simply trashing a single folder won't get rid of all your media, and may actually trash media from other projects that was stored in the wrong folder by mistake. In this case, a much better alternative is to use the Media Manager to "MOVE" all your media files from where ever they are to a single location -- say a new empty folder on your emptiest hard drive. Then, once all your media has been gathered into one place, trash the folder. In all cases, however, there's no need to keep the media from a project.)

Here's a second side note. Some people may still want to archive their media on something other than tape. What should they use?

Well, a friend of mine uses removable hard disks. While really expensive, this has the advantage of keeping everything in a digital state. Just connect the disk and he's ready to edit. Short-term this is a good solution. Long-term, it isn't. There's just no assurance that the same storage media will be around and able to be hooked up in ten or twenty years. I mean, look at all the old gear you've got cluttering your garage that used to be state of the art -- and that stuff is probably far less than ten years old.

Others may want to archive to DVD. This is OK, as long as you understand the limitations. First, DON'T archive your media as an MPEG file. While your file sizes shrink, so also does your ability to edit them. In spite of the marketing hype, MPEG is a distribution format, NOT an editing format.

Second, remember that a one hour Beta SP tape holds about 60 GB of media. A DV tape holds 12 GB. A DVD that you can burn only holds 4.2 GB. So it will take three DVDs to store the contents of one DV tape, or 12 DVDs to hold one Beta SP tape.

Third, if you still feel compelled to store your media on a DVD be sure to create a DATA DVD. This keeps your media in a pristine digital state that is available for editing. Just copy your digital files from your hard disk to the DVD as they are, without additional compression.

(By the way, depending upon the speed of your computer, it will probably take longer to copy the files from your DVD to your hard disk than it would to simply redigitize them. NOT that I have an opinion, or anything.)

Update (2/13/05)

In other articles, I've mentioned **Andreas Kiel**, who's the author of XML2Text. After reading last month's issue, Andreas had some additional comments, especially about archiving media.

In connection with the 'Archiving Media' article, this utility [[XML2Text](#)] might be worth to mention. [Andreas is the author of XML2TXT.]

[Also,] I agree to the approach to leave or store video on tape - I also recommend it as the best and fastest way, even if sources came from different types (DV, DV50, SD etc).

The way described in your article assumes that all material stays in your hands and are on one of the editors own tapes forever. In the environments I'm working, this is only partially true. Many times people get tapes from the news gathering, archives or costumers etc. These clips are now on their HD. The original tape go back or in case of the news it is deleted already.

In former times I always put them back to tape and had some GUI scripting, which read the TCs. (That technique - though not elegant at all - worked fine for me and customers). With the nice XML features

of FCP and XML2Text this can be done easier.

Drop all clips you want to lay off to video into a sequence and record to tape. Make sure the timeline timecode matches the tape (first clip's TC in the sequence equals first clip's TC on tape), export as XML and convert this with XML2Text to a 'Batch List' which reflects the new clip IOs and reel and keeps all relevant column info from the original.

This list can be archived with the project to retrieve clips later.

Additionally I always recommend to use batch lists of projects as they allow to build up a small clip/project/customer/tape database with FileMaker.

So, if we don't need to archive the media, what gets archived? Everything in the FCP Projects > My Project folder on your boot disk.

Remember, this is the folder that stores your FCP Project files, your music, sound effects, graphics and every other non-timecode file related to this project. Because everything is all in one place it is a very simple matter to drag this folder to a blank CD or DVD (depending upon how much space you need) and, presto!, you've got a complete backup of everything you need to re-create your project at any time in the future.

No muss. No fuss. And no trauma trying to track everything down at the end of a project.

Very cool!

This tip is from "Larry's FCP Newsletter," a very cool FREE monthly Final Cut Pro newsletter -- subscribe at Larry's web site: www.larryjordan.biz.

Larry Jordan is a post-production consultant and an Apple-Certified Trainer in Digital Media with over 25 years experience as producer, director and editor with network, local and corporate credits. Based in Los Angeles, he's a member of both the Directors Guild and Producers Guild.

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